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ABSTRACT

Educational purpose, policy, and practice in America have changed in important ways since World War II. For example, there have been three time periods with different educational purposes during the last forty years. For each of these periods, there were implicit assumptions made about why we educate, how we educate and where we educate. The first period devoted to "democracy in education," was replaced by "equality of educational opportunity," and was followed by the goal of "equity in education." Each of these assumptions has been influenced by changes in social goals, leaders, politics, scholarly research, and human and financial resources. Also, each has had its own policies and practices. If the current educational goal of "equity in education," is to be achieved, society must express its commitment to this educational purpose. The place where such a purpose can be fulfilled is the school. (Author/EB)

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FROM DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION TO EQUITY IN EDUCATION:

PURPOSE, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

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PREFACE

Educational purpose, policy, and practice in America have changed in important ways since World War II, especially as they affect the education of children. We have had three periods of distinct educational purpose. Each of these has had its concommitant policies and practices that stemmed from the purpose.

Three slogans of educational purpose have dominated the past forty years. The first of these, "democracy in education," waned in the fifties. It was replaced by "equality of educational opportunity," which became widely recognized in the sixties. Enthusiasm for it has diminished, and the emerging goal is "equity in education." In the trough between "democracy" and "equality" there was a profound interest in stiffening academic standards, exemplified by the post-Sputnik efforts in mathematics, science, foreign languages, and social studies. Similarly in the trough between "equality" and "equity" substantial concern has been voiced about the basic skills and students' lack of mastery of them.

Our sense of educational purpose affects our educational policies. These policies in turn influence our educational practice. The path from purpose to practice is not a simple, straight one. It is complicated, sometimes devious. Those complexities are vital to the account of changing educational purpose, policy, and practice. They detract from a neat linear model, but they are essential to an

understanding of education in this society.

Education is an applied human activity, one that is influenced by social goals, leaders, politics, scholarly research, human and financial resources. The changing role of each of these elements over the last forty years is the tale of education in America.

In the following pages I will deal with these three educational purposes chronologically and with the policies and practices that have accompanied them. Such a grid is inherently artificial but provides an organizational framework to look at the changing purposes, policies, and practices.

The dominant theme among the purposes is one of greater involvement in education. Democracy in education assumed a laissez-faire attitude toward education. The democratic political system seemed a useful model to apply to education without significant alteration in the status quo. Equality of educational opportunity recognized implicitly that such equality did not currently exist, that access was limited for some and that adjustments must be made to provide equality for all. Equity moves from that implicit understanding to explicit recognition that access and opportunity alone are not true equality. Modification of the internal educational processes must occur if each child is to secure academic achievement to the limits of his or her talent and temperament.

Policy in education is determined in large part by leaders, and the policies accompanying these purposes have been determined

and implemented by a varying and distinct set of leaders. In the era of "democracy" the principal leaders were professional educators, both professors of education and practitioners, particularly superintendents of schools. They were followed during the period of "equality" by government officials, particularly in the federal government, and the social scientists whom they employed to design and evaluate the programs intended to bring about equality. The current leaders in education, those committed to equity and capable of advancing it, are less identifiable but probably will combine knowledge of educational processes with political acuity and scholarly acumen.

The educational practice that has resulted from these changing purposes and policies has probably varied less than either the purposes or the policies. The school remains the central institution that educates, although its primacy was challenged seriously by the purpose and policy of the equality era. In the first period, the "democracy" era, the public school was accepted virtually without question as the place where the practice consistent with democratic purpose should take place. In the midle period of "equality," however, the government officials and the social scientists recognized that the school was a relatively weak determinant of educational achievement, and many spent much effort documenting educational influences outside the school. The current age of "equity" notes the limitations of the school but understands that most of the other agencies that educate are not as amenable to modification as the school is. Therefore, the school remains a central but not exclusive place for educational practice in the era of "equity."

FROM DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION TO EQUITY IN EDUCATION: PURPOSE, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

Rhetorical flourishes about education seldom determine practice, but they frequently influence it.[1] More important, they often provide evidence about what public purpose in education is at a given time. The public purpose, why we should educate, is often elusive and difficult to define. Ordinarily such purpose, when identified and when accepted by a significant portion of the public, influences public policy about education. The policy has an indirect and sometimes obscure relationship to the actual practice of education. Nontheless, for all the elusive character of the link between public statements about why we educate to the concrete school experience, it is possible to perceive a relationship. The child in a poverty-stricken community in rural Kentucky today has special reading and mathematics teachers because of the rhetorical flourish, "equality of educational opportunity." It became embodied in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which provides federal money to the child's Kentucky school district if the district has a sufficient number of children from families with low incomes to qualify for the funds for additional teachers.

"Equality of educational opportunity" has been a dominant theme in discussions about purpose in education during much of the

past twenty-five years. It was preceded, I believe, by a pervasive commitment to "democracy in education." I believe that it is being succeeded by a sentiment currently expressed as "equity in education." Each of these has a distinctive emphasis.

My focus will be on the transitions from the period of "democracy in education" to the time when "equality of educational opportunity" characterized our national educational aspirations to the contemporary shift to "equity in education." In the three phrases we can identify, I believe, fundamental differences in American attitudes toward education. In each of these are implicit assumptions about why we educate, how we educate, and where we educate. We have tended to keep both the definitions of what we mean by each of these phrases and the assumptions within them vague or implicit because when we became explicit we lost the consensus we believed that we had developed for the view.

The issues of educational purpose in a society are inextricably tied to the values the society holds for itself. Efforts by the educational system to change the values of the society by means of indoctrinating the young inevitably lead to difficulties or disasters if the educational system is at all successful in its task of inculcating divergent views. More likely, the educational system is unable to convince anyone of its alternative views. Most likely, the educational system follows the canons of the society as carefully as it can, carefully eschewing those topics on which no consensus

These shifts, then, in expressions of educational purpose reflect not only views about education, but views about the society. By looking at what we have sought from our educational system, we can see what we have expected from our society.

Democracy in Education

The phrase "democracy in education" came to the public attention as a goal capable of unifying diverse educational views in the period from the end of World War I until the end of World War II. It sounded almost like the title of John Dewey's 1916 classic, Democracy and Education, and the change of the conjunction to preposition epitomized the seemingly minor but actually major shift in content. No one knew exactly what "democracy in education" meant, and that doubtless was a significant element in its strength.

"Democracy in education" evoked four sentiments that evidently many Americans shared: First, principles of the educational system should be derived from the political organization; if democracy were good for the political system (and most believed that it was,

at least rhetorically), then it would be good for education too. Few challenged just what "majority rule and minority rights" meant for education. Although the U.S. had fought one world war "to make the world safe for democracy," by the end of the period of prominence of this theme the U.S. was again involved in a defense of its democratic principles against the threat of Fascism as represented by Germany, Italy and Japan. Thus, democracy was still much on peoples' minds during the thirties and forties.

Second, John Dewey, with his book of nearly the same name, exercised broad influence in matters of educational purpose. His prolific writings, his wide interest and participation in public affairs, his influence as a professor at three leading universities and his very long life contributed to make him during his lifetime the best known educational publicist since Horace Mann, who had undertaken that task in Massachusetts in the nineteenth century. Dewey, unlike Mann, exerted influence during his lifetime on a national basis and by his ideas (or what people thought his ideas were). Dewey was an educator, one committed to public education, but one who functioned principally and very influentially in the private sector.

Third, democracy had been associated with education since the American colonies declared their independence from England. The principal author of the document asserting American independence, Thomas Jefferson, subsequently enunciated what is probably the tersest rationale for education in this society, "If a nation expects to be both ignorant and free," Jefferson wrote to Colonel Yancey in 1816, "it expects what never was and never will be." Jefferson's point was that a society that expected to govern itself in a democratic fashion, as opposed to the authoritarianism of many European societies of the late eighteenth century, needed to provide a means by which its members could become knowledgeable about the responsibilities and obligations of citizenship.

A final reason for the popularity of the "democracy in education" rhetoric, particularly in the forties and early fifties, was that it reinforced the existing social movement toward minimizing differences among Americans on the basis of class, regionalism, or National origin. The essence of democracy to many Americans in the 1940's was the relentless move toward the middle class. The economy expanded as a result of World War II. The demand for paid

workers the expansion created, legitimized women's employment outside the home. These developments coincided to bring about an enormous increase in the standard of living, thus limiting the need for youngsters to drop out of school to support the family. Such was the essence of the "democratic" way. An evidence of upward mobility in many families was extending the period that children remained in school, whether it was completion of high school for families who previously had only completed "grammar school" or whether it was college attendance, sometimes assisted by the GI Bill. Thus, democracy meant becoming middle class, and middle class meant more formal education. Somehow it all seemed to fit in the immediate post-war years.

"Democracy in education" was an educational goal that was largely developed by professional educators, many of them college and university professors and some school administrators and teachers. It seemed to be broadly shared by the emerging educational organizations.

The Educational Policies Commission, a unit of the National Education Association, published a number of pamphlets and books during this period in which the Commission attempted to relate educational policies to democracy. Among the titles were: Education and the Defense of American Democracy (1940), Education and Economic Well-Being in American Democracy (1940), Education for Democracy (1937), Learning the Ways of Democracy (1940), Schools of Democracy (1939), Syllabus on the School in American Democracy (1939), The Purposes of Education in American Democracy (1938), The Structure and Administration of Education in American Democracy (1938), The Unique Function of Education in American Democracy (1937). Members of the Educational Policies Commission included George D. Strayer, George Counts, Lotus Coffman, John K. Norton, Cornelia S. Adair. By the early fifties the term had fallen into disfavor and, as a result, disuse.[4]

Why we educated, at mid-twentieth century, then, could be summarized by citing the needs of citizens to be informed, for students to acquire the skills that would allow them to get the jobs that were rapidly expanding, for young people to be assisted in adjusting to the new, complex, urban, and industrial life that was so different from that of their parents. The rubric "democracy" seemed to cover all these issues, but its very expansiveness and lack of applicability to the educational process permitted a diffusion of educational effort, rather than a focus upon particular issues.

How we educated in this period changed gradually. In the thirties many affluent public school systems, both suburban and urban, began experimenting with revised pedagogies that stressed the need for children to participate more actively in the educational process. Often labeled "child-centered" by enthusiastic educators who believed that they had discovered an alternative to the authoritarianism of the traditional teacher, they varied enormously in their manifestations. Out of these activities came projects on Indians, chocolate factories in Switzerland, and models of the Great Wall of China. All these theoretically taught social studies and a little English on the side, the essence of the "core curriculum" of the forties in which linguisstic requirements were included with more traditional studies of geography, history, and eonomics. Group discussions, in which each opinion was of equal merit, often replaced report writing and examinations as means of assessing students. Grading was often reduced to P/F, rather than the old percentile marks or letter grades.

Collectively this new pedagogy stressed more active individual student involvement in the learning process, more variation in the curriculum to allow for individual interests, and more cooperation among the young who would work together on many projects. Together these embodied the "democratic spirit."

A major unknown is the prevalence of this democratic pedagogy. Certainly discussions of these kinds abounded in the professional literature for teachers and in many schools of education. How much practice actually changed, especially in working class and Black schools, is hard to estimate.

Where we educated consciously during this period was chiefly the school. Since we minimized in our rhetoric any class, racial, or regional differences, little attention was given to differences among schools or the different kinds of experiences children might have in them.

A major change was occurring, however, in child-rearing. Mothers who read easily, or who believed they should, now had experts to guide them on the expectations they should hold for their children and how best to achieve these expectations. This expert advice came in a variety of forms: from the government; from magazines; from books and columns.

The consequence of this published systematic wisdom applied to children was to provide a standard by which families and teachers could judge the progress of their children and students. The relatime consistency of these views contributed to the homogenization and middle class orientation that became pervasive in mid-century.

In characterizing the educational rhetoric of the past decades, I am tempted to draw too tightly the lines between "democracy in education" and "equality of educational opportunity." The nature of social history is that definitive changes do not occur neatly.

One sentiment blurs into another sentiment until one can say that the preponderant view has changed. The image is one of a rainbow. One can point to a distinct blue and to a distinct violet, but one can not point with equal precision to the point at which blue ends and violet begins. So it was with the transition from "democracy in education," which one would easily identify as the dominant educational goal in 1945, to "equality of educational opportunity," which could be similarly identified in 1965. The decade of the fifties, however, was the blur in between.

Fundamentally the fifties was a decade of uncertainty about education. The uncertainty centered on both purpose and method. We were unclear why we were educating, although higher and higher proportions of the age group were remaining in school, and we were similarly unclear about how we should educate them. Some were not even sure we were educating them. Dissatisfaction was expressed in books, death of the Progressive Education Association, rise of the Council for Basic Education, reaction to Sputnik, teacher education critiques, and Conant's American high school remedies proposed included more academic rigor in professional education, National Academy of Education, MAT programs -- curriculum reform and "teacher-proof" curricula.

Educators' attention had been so taken up by these traumatic events and consequent challenges to their authority, largely from within academe, that many had failed to take serious note of a significant change occurring on the banks of the Potomac. Professional educators had been the chief spokesmen of educational purpose and policy for most of this century, and their calling had been held in rather high regard by the American public. These recent attacks had made them defensive both about their own role and about the efficacy of their enterprize. Most paid little attention to government activities, especially federal government activities, since it was well known by every student who had taken Education 101 that education was not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution and that the tenth amendment had left everything to the states not explicitly given to the federal government in the Constitution.

Equality of Educational Opportunity

The Brown decision in 1954 fundamentally changed the balance of power among those who determine educational purpose and policy.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People finally brought to the Supreme Court in 1952 a group of cases involving exclusion of black children from white public schools in Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. This came to be known as the Brown case. The unanimous decision of the Court on May 17, 1954 found in part: "To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. . . . We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."[10]

The Court recognized the wide applicability of its decision, and therefore sought further testimony before giving another opinion in 1955 on compliance. In its 1955 decision the Court, again unanimous, spoke to the varied local conditions and gave responsibility to the original courts that heard the cases. The Court continued, "In fashioning and effectuating the decrees, the courts will be guided by equitable principles. Traditionally, equity has been characterized by a practical flexibility in shaping its remedies and by a facility

for adjusting and reconciling public and private need. These cases call for the exercise of these traditional attributes of equity power."[11] With these two cases as well as with the many that followed them at the local, district, and appellate levels the federal government began to play a major role in determining the purpose of education and how that purpose would be made manifest in practice.

Immediately after the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), the Office of Education budget topped one billion dollars. Its budget has continued to grow as needs of special categories of students are brought to fore, e.g., college students, bilingual, handicapped, and the poor. In 1979 the estimated budget for the Office of Education is nearly $11 billion.

Just as the conclusion of World War II in 1945 served as a distinct date to identify the rainbow violet of "democracy in education" as a characteristic statement of purpose in American education, so does the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 signify the preeminence of distinctive rainbow blue of "equality of educational opportunity" as the national goal for education at that time. From the fifties to the seventies the why, the how, and the where we educate were determined by the relationship of these means to the goal of "equality of educational opportunity."

Why equality of educational opportunity? Rhetoricians committed to answering that question looked to history for examples, and found the record replete with them, beginning with Thomas Jefferson, who had asserted in the Declaration of Independence that all men were created equal, an assertion that Abraham Lincoln had repeated in the Gettysburg Address. Social scientists succeeded statesmen in the twentieth century, and many of them wrote of the American search for equality, for definitions of equality, for applications of that definition if it could be found. Gunnar Myrdal titled his study of the Negro in America, An American Dilemma (1944). Myrdal explained his choice of title in his text - Conflict between American creed and reality.

Additional rhetorical outpourings supplemented Myrdal in the late fifties and sixties. One of these, Michael Young's The Rise of the Meritocracy,

A volume with much more popular following, John Gardner's Excellence (1961), captured the national dilemma of the period in its sub-title, "Can we be equal and excellent too?" Gardner, a master of the simple phrase explaining the complex issue, explained that the book was about excellence, but also about equality, "about the kinds of equality that can and must be honored, and the kinds that cannot be forced." Gardner became Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1965-68.

How was the United States to achieve equality of educational opportunity? This enunciation of a federal priority for education marked a fundamental difference that has shaped educational developments in the United States since the mid-sixties. Determination of educational priorities shifted. Both in rhetorical issues of purpose and in operational issues of implementation the professional educators withdrew. In the previous years these decisions had been principally those of educational professionals - both professor and practitioners. In the new era the federal government dominated. There the individuals reaching educational decisions made up an amalgam of professional educators (a few), some bureaucrats, but, most important, idealistic

social scientists who were committed to certain American ideals and believed that these ideals could be achieved through modifications of the educational system. Frequently young, often trained in sociology, economics or history, these committed, tireless young men (and occasionally women) labored mightily with full conviction that theirs was a vital crusade. Thomas Jefferson had called his educational policy a crusade against ignorance. Theirs was a crusade against the specters of old style bureaucracy, special interests in education, and conservatism. The worked in Washington, and they worked in their home communities on government contracts and grants providing the data that were to become the policy documents that would bring about the millenium the liberal Democrats of the sixties sought and even believed might occur. They would make a "war on poverty," establish an Office Of Economic Opportunity, and their principal weapons in these battles would be money and the power of education. Victory meant elimination of poverty and achievement of an education of high quality for all. Victory was elusive.

The emphasis was on the tangibles: access, money, facilities, special programs. Optimism ran high that the federal government, given these worthy goals, would be able to achieve them with additional funds and with requirements regarding access. The federal government could control those tangibles; it had the resources (or so most thought) to provide the money and to require compliance for the access. These were the essential ingredients of the federal strategies of that era.

A key element in the federal strategy was desegregation. The southern states, some northern communities and a few northern cities were desegregating their schools. Here the access issue was clear: blacks and whites must have the opportunity to attend the same schools. The principal institution bringing about this desegregation was the federal court system. Its efforts were supplemented by the federal legislative and administrative branches. The Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare determined whether the school district was in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and the Office of Education began to provide special funds to desegregating school districts under the Emergency School Assistance Act after its passage in 1972. The key to successful desegregation, however, was likely to be strong community leadership, a quality that was difficult to provide with either court orders or funds.

A second major element of the equality concern was school finance. Great variation occurred in funds available for costs of public schooling. These were provided by state and local governments by various formulas, most influenced heavily by the amount and value of taxable property in the district. Local districts with little income from property taxes had less to spend on their schools than did districts with greater property tax income. Often there was a coincidence of poor families in districts with low property tax income, and, therefore, those schools had less money to spend on educating their children. The California state courts recognized this limitation on equality of opportunity in the Serrano v. Priest

decision in 1971 and required a state wide re-examination of school finance to make it more equitable. Subsequently approximately twenty-five other states have revised their school finance provisions.

A third legal effort to bring about equality of opportunity was the Lau v. Nichols case. In this California case the Supreme Court in 1974 determined that school districts receiving federal funds must provide means for children not fluent in English to acquire English fluency. This decision, which did not specify how the schools were to make the youngsters fluent in English, moved the Courts' interest from mere access or opportunity to the process by which children would acquire skills. The Court did not mandate a particular process but did require a special program. The 1967 amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act included the Bilingual Education Act, which provided funds for the Office of Education to distribute to school districts with substantial numbers of students with "limited English-speaking ability."

Educators, unaccustomed to being either in the center of a growing, popular enterprise or in a financially prosperous venture, reveled in the additional funds and the services they bought. This infusion of federal funds, generally in areas that had not received them in the past, brought a prominence to educators which was new to them. It was the unusual educator, basking in such rare beneficence, who would speak frankly to the enthusiastic, optimistic federal official who believed that with this new help to the school, great

changes would come, and tell him that the school was unlikely to do what the society did not, in fact, want to happen. It was an extremely rare educator who would announce outside the privacy of his own living room that this faith in education, enunciated by the President and repeated by his followers, was unjustified. Few would say, basking in the first fruits of the affluence of modern America that many had ever seen, that this faith in their institutions was misplaced. Many knew privately that their schools could not change the social order, but who wanted to say so now when the government thought they might? That was the dilemma for professional educators of the sixties.

Their dilemma was resolved rather quickly when additional social scientists were called into the scene. The new methodology was "evaluation." Given the money that was being spent, the government must be "accountable," and if funds were to be continued, it must be demonstrated. Predictably, as any sanguine educator knew, family and social class were better indicators of students' academic success than was any measure of school investment, including teachers' preparation or facilities in the school. This was a disconcerting finding. The first major public statement of it was James S. Coleman's study done for the U.S. Office of Education in 1966. When commenting on his study, which was widely interpreted by others as minimizing the role of the school in influencing students' educational achievement, Coleman wrote in the summer of 1966, "Schools are successful only insofar as

they reduce the dependence of a child's opportunities upon his social origins." [14]

Where, then, was this equality of educational opportunity to be achieved? Despite what the educators knew but were hesitant to admit, the federal government's policy makers bet on the public schools. Their knowledge of how schools actually worked was limited, but initially their faith was substantial.

Since the passage of Title I of ESEA in 1965, the federal government provided through 1979 $ 23.2 billion to local school districts. Although the early regulations governing expenditures of those funds were somewhat unclear, gradually the federal government limited the purposes for which the funds could be spent. They were not to be used for general aid to the school district nor were they to provide services ordinarily paid for by state or local funds. These were extra funds, given to the district on the basis of the proportion of low income families, and services were provided at the school level for children who were doing badly academically. The law permitted the fund to be spent on grades one through twelve, but most districts concentrated their funds on primary grade pupils.

The federal policy makers and some of their colleagues in state government acted on the assumption that additional money made available to school districts to provide extra educational services to needy children would improve the academic performance of these same youngsters. In the minds of the policy makers the principal institution to provide this educational remedy was unquestionably the school. The school authorities agreed. Soon the researchers in education were challenging that assumption.

The efficacy of the school was challenged for several reasons. The strategy the government was using emphasized providing money and directing the schools to provide additional educational services for needy children. Put crudely, the federal government was trying to buy improved academic performance, but it was not clear what commodity it was purchasing or what currency was legal tender in the transaction. Initial indications were that infusions of new money, even substantial infusions, did not result immediately in improved academic performance.[16] The transformation of funds into improved student performance is a massively complex one, little understood by educators themselves, who frequently were not consulted on the matter, and even less understood by the officials who were providing the funds.

Not surprisingly the consequent distress when academic performance did not improve challenged American faith in schooling. The loss of faith in schools that has characterized much of the last decade rests on two false premises:

(1) Our assumption that money can buy learning

(2) Our assumption that education by itself will bring upward social and economic mobility.

These two assumptions became badly intertwined in the minds of both policy makers, educators, and the public. The scapegoat became the school.

Much of the criticism of the school was legitimate. When the new money began to pour in, few recognized the fundamental changes in assumptions held by school officials that the influx of funds required. For a variety of reasons school officials traditionally made tacit assumptions about attitudes, habits, and talents that children brought with them to the classroom. The job of the teacher and the school was to move the children into the curriculum, which was also organized along these assumptions, and to assist the youngsters to do well, others to do middling, and some to do badly. Generally, teachers believed, children from prosperous, stable families did better than those from poor, unstable families. There were always some exceptions to that general rule, but both research findings and conventional wisdom supported these beliefs about student achievement measured in the conventional ways - teacher-made tests, standardized tests, and course grades.

What was eminently unclear about the new federal activity in education was how the increase in money for schooling would change this pattern, a pattern that held not just for the U.S. but to a considerable degree for every other nation with a well defined educational system. What was the school supposed to do to change it?

Beginning with Coleman in 1966, researchers, most of whom were trained in the use of quantitative methodologies, regularly reported the ineffectiveness of the school in altering the influence of family background on educational achievement. Reigning research methodologies of the day emphasized large scale, aggregate analyses, and most of these reported unequivocally that the school was less influential than family factors in determining educational achievement.

Concomitant with these findings came the work of other researchers, notably Christopher Jencks and his colleagues, that educational achievement alone did not bring about social and economic mobility.[17] These findings, widely reported in the press, alienated educators, confused policy makers, and generally depressed the public who read them.

The most intriguing question, however, is: Why such a fuss? Who ever believed that the school alone principally determined educational achievement or that educational achievement alone, principally determined economic or social mobility? The reason for the fuss seems to be that policy makers and educators together promised too

much for their interventions and in promising too much nearly lost public support for the vastly important, but more limited, role that the schools must play.

Only when educational research in the 1970's moved away from the large scale, aggregate analyses that had always characterized it, did the real effect of programs such as Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act begin to become apparent. For example, in 1974 the National Institute of Education began a study of Title I which was really a series of simple and logical questions, to wit: (1) Does Title I money reach the intended beneficiaries? (2) is it used to supplement their instruction? (3) If so, do well-planned and well-implemented instructional programs increase student achievement? The answers to these three questions, which NIE reported in 1978, are Yes, Yes, and Certainly. The conundrum for the policy maker that remains: How do federal, state, or even local officials assure that principals, and indeed teachers, mount "well-planned" and "well-implemented" instructional programs?

Equity in Education

The argument in education in the sixties and early seventies centered on what the economists and other social scientists advising the federal government on its educational policy called the "inputs." These social scientists were accustomed to dealing with tangibles; they drew many of their models from the physical and natural sciences. They assumed that if one varied what one put into the equation, then one could predict accurately variations in the results of the equation. In science that is largely true. In education, it turned out, such was not the case. Much as many might have wished it, education was not a laboratory discipline but rather an applied human activity. Therefore, the rules of science did not apply as uniformly as they

did in physics or chemistry. The human activity that was education could certainly be improved by scientific findings, particularly those of the emerging "cognitive sciences," but the paradigms of the sciences did not hold for education.

Following the social scientists' paradigm for economics, educational researchers in the sixties emphasized the "inputs" to education. If one attended to those, then inevitably one would also look to the "outputs." As disenchantment grew about the effect of the inputs on equality of educational opportunity, then attention began to focus upon the "outputs." For some the progression from "equality" to "equity" meant identity of output. Translated into educational practice, that meant children should get higher marks, or at a minimum, get promoted annually from one grade to another, regardless of academic performance.

Such automatic or social promotion was an educational travesty. Equality, many initially believed, was to be achieved by vast increases in the proportion of high school graduates. The difficulty was that American views about level of performance of high school graduates was based upon the memories of middle-aged Americans who had graduated from high school when such an accomplishment was reserved to the minority of teenagers and was likely to mean for many satisfactory completion of four years of English compositions and literature, three years of mathematics, science, history, and at least two years of a foreign language. With high school diplomas going to 80 percent of the age

group in 1978 and with drastic relaxation of the academic curriculum in many places, many assumed that "equality" meant a deploma alone and not the mastery of the knowledge such a diploma had previously implied.

Dissatisfaction with the consequences of equality of educational opportunity has led us to seek a rhetorical flourish that will improve educational practice in ways consistent with the overall goals of equality of educational opportunity. Few disagree today with the principle of equality of educational opportunity, but many observe its promise was not fulfilled. The equality was only in the apparent

allocation of resources, not in the subtle functioning of the educational process. The translation of equality of opportunity to equality of result further demeaned the consequences by appearing to disregard any concern for quality or objective standards. Discussions of that subject were frequently cloaked by their opponents with charges of elitism or discrimination. What such discussions obscured was that the equality that was sought was failing to be achieved through the remedies that were proposed.

From such criticism has come a concern for equity in education. Unlike the literature on democracy in education or equality, the commentary on equity is still sparse, in part because it is still little understood. Equity in education requires attention both to the tangible resources allocated to education and also to the intangible but powerful forces that influence educational achievement. Equality of opportunity assumes that children simply need to be given a chance; equity means modifying the educational process so that all youngsters are not expected to adjust to a common set of assumptions about what their home experience has been.

Further, equity implies recognizing that the merit system has not always worked perfectly in the selection of senior teachers and administrators in the past; rectifying this inadequacy does not mean promoting occasional women or members of minority groups to positions in which they have neither the training, experience, or most important, the informal professional network to allow them to perform the tasks satisfactorily. What equity does mean is finding those qualified

women and minorities who do exist and creating the conditions, principally not isolating them from their colleagues, that will allow them to perform their duties as expected. Equity recognizes that it is a disservice to women, minorities, and the poor, whether they be children or adults, to set a lower standard for their performance than for others.

Equity also requires that changes in the educational agencies occur so that all groups have the experiences that the educational system assumes so that all can compete without disadvantage. The obligation of the educational system that is equitable is to be sure that all its students have those "experiences." Many will have received them informally; for those who have not, the educational system must provide them. Many children from middle class homes have stories read to them from the time they are tiny. They come to school with that experience, largely pleasurable and certainly educative, a foundation upon which the school can build. Children from homes with no books have neither the experience nor the foundations. The school, if it is equitable, must accommodate its program to both students. When the educational system is secure in its knowledge that its students have had such experiences, then it must assess the performance of each rigorously and fairly.

Up to now we have paid much attention to measuring what went into the educational process, i.e., facilities, average expenditure per pupil, teacher preparation measured by degrees and courses, and we have sought equivalence in those factors. We have also paid

a good deal of attention to measuring student achievement by testing at the completion of the school year. We have paid remarkably little attention to affecting the educational process which the student underwent. Even our tests are constructed not to measure what a student had been specifically taught in the classroom but rather what the student had learned more generally in a variety of circumstances. Such tests obviously benefit those youngsters whose environment is rich in learning the things that testmakers believe we should all know and penalize those youngsters whose environment provides other knowledge. If we believe that the testmakers really are right about what we all should know, then our schools have an obligation to teach that body of information and skills to all children and not to rely on some to pick it up outside of school and others to miss it.

Equity in education will come when we make sure that we systematically provide to all children the basic information that the society deems important for them to know. Some will learn it quickly; some will learn it slowly; some will not learn it at all. That differentiation in learning, however, should be the result of individual differences in talent and perseverance, not by assumptions made by educational agencies about what they must teach and what they need not teach because the child has already learned that somewhere else.

Equity in education, then, embraces both the skills that must be learned and the assumptions that govern the organization of our educational institutions. It focuses on the process of education,

allowing for individual differences in achievement but seeking that those differences be the consequence of individual variation, not the result of the educational agency favoring one group over another, consciously or unconsciously, through its curriculum, personnel or organization.

Within such a definition of equity lie three important assumptions: why we educate, how we educate, and where we educate.

Why we educate for equity comes in part from John Rawls' classic description of 1972, A Theory of Justice. Rawls' notion is essentially one of fairness. Fairness applied in education means that everyone ought to have the best chance the society can manage to receive good education and that the circumstances need not be identical.

The reason we want a good education, we now tend to believe, is because we think that education and the literacy it provides are desirable ends in themselves. To be literate in late twentieth century America is to be able to partake more vigorously in a variety of human activities than would otherwise be possible. No activities are precluded by literacy; many are dependent upon it. Most important, the options for an interesting and fulfilling life are increased for the literate person, decreased for the illiterate one. Secondly, the range of activities by which one can support oneself if one is literate is also substantially expanded. Education for literacy, then, is a desirable end in itself. If we believe that such education is a desirable good in our society, we should find every way to allow

everyone to be educated to the limits of his or her talents and temperament. Those characteristics should principally determine one's educational achievement, not family background, ethnicity, or sex. Such is not currently the case.

How we educate to make talent and perseverance the principal determinants of educational achievement is presently unclear. Research in education traditionally has focused upon what we do not know and upon exploring those questions about which there is uncertainty, not upon collecting the extant information on a given subject in order to improve existing educational practice. The "value-free" model of social science has allowed us to isolate in some detail the social, economic, and demographic factors that account for variation in educational achievement, but it has not helped us substantially in identifying those practices that will allow us to tap the minds and hearts of children, teachers, and administrators to make them more effective in learning, instructing, and managing. The one conclusion that we have documented fully but have not yet accepted is that money alone will not bring about a change in how children learn. Money can provide additional services that may enhance learning, but research or informed practice must determine what those beneficial services will be. Those answers have been slow in emerging and very tardy in being implemented.

Where this education should take place has also been challenged. The dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of schooling that was interpreted by the public in the wake of the work of Coleman and others led us to diminish the role of schooling. The radical critiques

of Christopher Jencks and of Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis reinforced this view, although from a different perspective.[18] From an entirely separate vantage point Lawrence Cremin and Hope Leichter have stressed the many agencies in the society that educate. Cremin has emphasized the "configuration" of educational agencies including families, the media, syagogues, churches, museums and others, while Leichter's work has focused on the role of the family as educator. Analytically these scholars are entirely accurate. The conclusions for policy, however, are less evident.

All of these critics are correct, of course, in pointing to the limited effect that schooling presently has upon educational achievement. Nevertheless, the fact that the schools are not the principal determinants of educational achievement does not change two realities: (1) the schools remain the only agencies in the society whose principal activity is education; (2) schools, unlike other agencies that educate, are amenable to influence through public policy. To ignore those two factors is to minimize the centrality of schools in the educational process.

Such dimunition of the school role also contributes to a dangerous opportunity to allow dispirited educators to point to the multiplicity of other factors social scientists have discovered affect learning to explain the failure of the students to achieve satisfactorily in the schools. The exhausted teacher or depressed principal can always point to the malignant effect of television, the disintegration of the nuclear family, the permissive nature of the society to explain why children are doing poorly in high school.

Other, more direct explanations might be the lack of expectations on the part of the teachers and administrators for the students to achieve, a curriculum that made few demands upon the students, little homework or requirement for what was assigned to be completed, and other school-related phenomena.

Doubtless we will not eliminate the predictive value of social class for educational achievement quickly, but we ought to reduce it so that elements more directly related to educational achievement, i.e., talent and perseverance, are more influential predictors than they are now. To accomplish such a fundamental task will require, of course, the commitment of the society in general and the educators in particular that such a task is essential. I believe that the current public dissatisfaction with the educational level of many young Americans presents the opportunity for a consensus about the desirability of such educational reform to develop. The forces that have led thirty-six states to develop tests of minimum competency for their students can be harnessed into public support for more effective education.

Commitment by itself will not bring equity. Money, too, is necessary. The fundamental lesson of the sixties and seventies, however, is that additional funds will not necessarily provide better education for all students. They are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for improved education.

But even commitment and funds alone are not enough. In addition, we must have knowledge about how best to help youngsters learn in the school what other youngsters have learned in their families or other settings. We may even conclude that the school is not the best agency to assure this learning, but we are far from that conclusion yet. Teachers and administrators need to modify their practices so that learning will be enhanced. Most would be willing to do so if they knew how. Research has been spotty on those vital questions, and

now it must address them more systematically. We know more about these subjects than we have often admitted. Our educational future demands that we collect what we already know and learn more about those areas in which our knowledge is inadequate. Most important, we must learn how to make available in usable forms to teachers, administrators, and policy makers what we have learned through research.

Equity in education, then, will come not simply from rhetoric, legislation or funds. Equity requires both the society's commitment to maximizing the educational achievement of the individual and the availability of funds to provide additional educational services. The society must effectively express that commitment as its central educational purpose. But none of those alone will bring equity. The final fundamental component is the knowledge of how to educate everyone, particularly those for whom academic achievement has been elusive in the past, and the application of that knowledge to practice. The place where such education is likely to be accomplished, particularly for those for whom educational achievement has been limited in the past, is the school.

FOOTNOTES

[1]I am indebted to a number of my colleagues at the National Institute of Education for their comments on this paper. I am especially grateful to Maureen Treacy and to Beth Buehlmann at the National Institute of Education for research assistance in the preparation of this paper. I alone, of course, am responsible for the views expressed in this paper.

[2]For example, the percent of public secondary school students enrolled in Latin and modern foreign languages in each of these years was:

	Latin	Modern Foreign Languages
1900	50.5%	22.1%
1928	22 %	25.2%
1948	7.8%	13.7%
1968	2.9%	27.7%
1974	1.2%	22.9%

"Summary Table, Public High School Enrollments in Foreign Languages, with Percents of Total PSS Enrollment, Grades 9-12, 1890-1974."

[3]The percent of 17 year olds who graduated from high school increased substantially.

Year of Graduation	Percent of 17-year olds who Graduated from High School
1920	16.3%
1930	28.8%
1940	49 %
1950	57.4%
1960	63.4%
1970	75.6%

"High School Graduates, by Sex: 1870 to 1970", Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part I, U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census. 1975.

[4]A sample of prominent books on education in the late thirties and forties reveal in their titles the efforts to link education and democracy, e.g. George E. Axtelle and William W. Wattenberg (eds.), Teachers for Democracy, Fourth Yearbook of the John Dewey Society, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1940); Harold B. Albertz and Boyd H. Bode (eds.), Educational Freedom and Democracy, Second Yearbook of the John Dewey Society, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1938); and George I. Counts, The Prospects of American Democracy, (New York: John Day, 1938).

[5]Discussion with Lee Stewart, Ladies Home Journal, New York, New York, March, 1979; Robert Gales, Harper Publishing Company, New York, New York, March, 1979; and Essie Norkin, Office of Public Information and Education, and Charles Gershenson, Children's Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Office of Human Development Services, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C., April 24, 1979.

[6]James B. Conant, The American High School, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).

[7]The five founding members who identified themselves as solely in education were

Roald Campbell
John B. Carroll
Lawrence A. Cremin
John I. Goodlad
T. R. McConnell

Those identified as holding joint appointments were

Bruno Bettleheim
Lee J. Cronbach
Robert J. Havighurst
Israel Scheffler

The remaining founders, most of whom were professors of an academic discipline, were

Stephen K. Bailey
Bernard Bailyn
Gary S. Becker
Jerome S. Bruner
William K. Frankera
Richard Hofstadter
Fritz Machlup
Robert K. Merton
David Riesman
Theodore W. Schultz
Patrick Suppes
Ralph W. Tyler

[8]For a more general review of the National Science Foundation's investment see The Status of Pre-College Science, Mathematics and Social Studies Educational Practices in U. S. Schools, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975.

[9]See "Discussion: The Education Industries," Harvard Educational Review XXXVII (1) Winter 1967. Participants included Paul Goodman, Donald W. Oliver, Gerald Holton. G. Howard Goold, and Edward L. Katzenbach.

[10]Brown v Board of Education, 374 U.S. 483 (1954).

[11]Brown v Board of Education, 349 U.S. 294 (1955).

[12]Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, Vol. I, (New York: Harper & Row, 1944) p.lxix.

[13]John Gardner, Excellence: Can We be Equal and Excellent Too? (New York: Harper & Row, 1961) p. xi. The book has sold over 100,000 copies.

[14]James S. Coleman, Equality of Educational Opportunity (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966). Also: James S. Coleman, "Equal Schools or Equal Students?" The Public Interest, 1966, #4, p. 72.

[15]Frederick Mosteller and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., On Equality of Educational Opportunity (New York: Random House, 1972).

[16]The early evaluations of Title I programs were not encouraging in demonstrating the effectiveness of the programs in increasing student achievement.

The 1977 National Institute of Education study, directed by Paul Hill and Iris Rotberg, evaluated stable, well-managed Title I programs and found that children in them made significant gains in reading and arithmetic in Grades I and III. Similarly several national tests given in the last few years show encouraging results that student achievement in the primary grades is increasing. These grades are the ones where federal operational and research funds have been concentrated. Decline is still evident at upper grades where neither significant federal research nor operational funds have been concentrated.

[17]Christopher Jencks, et al. Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1972).

[18]Ibid.

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976).

[19]Lawrence A. Cremin, "Changes in the Ecology of Education: The School and the Other Educators," paper presented at the symposium "The Future of Formal Education: the Role of Institutional Schooling in Industrial Society", University of Stockholm, September 11-12, 1978.

Hope Jensen Leichter, "Families and Communities as Educators: Some Concepts of Relationship," Teachers College Record 79 (May 1978): 567-658.

[20]David Riesman, Constraint and Variety in American Education (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958).